

# FROM PAGANISM TO CHRISTIANITY IN THE TEMPLES OF ATHENS

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... cunctaque eorum fana templa delubra,  
 si qua etiam nunc restant integra, praecepto  
 magistratuum destrui conlocationeque venerandae  
 Christianae religionis signi expiari praecipimus.<sup>1</sup>  
 (Codex Theodosianus, xvi.10.25)

In A.D. 435 Theodosius II issued this edict, requiring the destruction of any pagan temples and shrines still remaining intact, and the purification of their sites by the setting up of a cross. But the existence of temples converted into churches in all provinces of the Roman Empire provides evidence that the law was not universally observed,<sup>2</sup> and it has long been recognized that the law was applied more rigorously in some areas than in others. This measure to speed up the transition from paganism to Christianity was particularly unsuccessful in Athens, and it was perhaps an effort to explain away the widespread disregard of the law there that led, in the nineteenth century, to a misinterpretation of the law itself, reading it as authorizing, as an alternative to destruc-

<sup>1</sup> The substance of this article was the theme of a lecture delivered at Dumbarton Oaks in November 1964. I am grateful to Professor Ernst Kitzinger and his colleagues for the hospitality of the *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* toward this expanded form. Thanks are also due to Professor Richard Krauthheimer for valuable comments and suggestions. My indebtedness to Professor Homer Thompson will be apparent to all who have read his "Athenian Twilight: A.D. 267-600," *JRS*, 49 (1959), 61-72, or who have observed my free use of material from the Athenian Agora. The following abbreviations are used for the works most frequently cited:

- ABME* Ἀρχεῖον τῶν βυζαντινῶν μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος  
*AE* Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς  
*AJA* *American Journal of Archaeology*  
*AM* *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Athenische Abteilung*  
*BCH* *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*  
*BSA* *Annual of the British School at Athens*  
*DOP* *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*  
*EMME* Εὐρετήριο τῶν μεσαιωνικῶν μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος  
*Ergon* Ἔργον τῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας  
*IG, II<sup>2</sup>* *Inscriptiones Graecae, II<sup>2</sup>*, ed. by U. Kochler (Berlin, 1893)  
*CIG* *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum, II*, ed. by A. Böckh (Berlin, 1828); *IV*, ed. by H. Roehl (Berlin, 1877)  
*JdI* *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*  
*JRS* *Journal of Roman Studies*  
*LP* *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. by L. Duchesne (Paris, 1955)  
*PAÄ* Πρακτικὰ τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν  
*PAE* Πρακτικὰ τῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας  
*PG* J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1857-66)  
*PL* J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1844-55)  
*Travlos*, Πολεοδομικὴ = J. Travlos, *Πολεοδομικὴ Ἐξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν* (Athens, 1960)  
*Vita Isidori* *Das Leben des Philosophen Isidoros von Damaskios von Damaskos*, ed. by Rudolf Asmus (Leipzig, 1911)  
*Vita Procli* Πρόκλος, ἡ περὶ Εὐδαιμονίας, ed. by J. F. Boissonade, in C. G. Cobet, *Diogenes Laertius* (Paris, 1878)

<sup>2</sup> F. W. Deichmann, in "Frühchristliche Kirchen in antiken Heiligtümern," *JdI*, 54 (1939), 103-136, lists eighty-nine examples from Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Constantinople, Greece, Italy, Gaul, and North Africa.

tion, the conversion of temples into places of Christian worship.<sup>3</sup> The text, however, presents no alternative and *expiari* suggests not conversion, but, rather, exorcism of the pagan spirits which might be supposed to have survived the destruction of the building. There was no provision for conversion because the order for destruction was regarded as final. Through frequent repetition, the nineteenth-century version of the decree has acquired the stamp of authority,<sup>4</sup> and is still often cited as evidence that the transformation of all Athenian temples dates from the middle of the fifth century.

But neither the historical nor the archaeological evidence supports the view that the complete Christianization of Athens took place with any such rapidity; and we are forced to conclude that the conception of the gods departing from their temples, each to be replaced at once by the saint with the most closely comparable attributes, to whom the worshipers obediently transferred their allegiance in response to imperial decree, probably bears little relation to the truth.

The history of Christian Athens begins with St. Paul's famous sermon to the members of the Council of the Areopagus, when, with a brilliant stroke of opportunism, he turned their scepticism to good account by preaching the Unknown God. The pride with which later generations of Athenians laid hold of this event and of the conversion of Dionysios, a member of the Council itself, was perhaps hardly sustained by the facts. Paul's success in Athens, notwithstanding the eminence of the Areopagite, was only moderate, summed up in a single verse of the Acts (17:34): "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed; among the which was Dionysios the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." This is a bleak account compared with the enthusiastic detail accorded Paul's triumphs elsewhere, and it would, indeed, be hard to find a place where the inhabitants were so unreceptive to Christianity.

Although a few Christian congregations are recorded for Greece from the time of St. Paul, they left no visible traces for the first three centuries. By 325 the Athenian church was sufficiently well recognized to be represented at the Council of Nicaea, but Greece as a whole, with a total of only three bishops, made a poor showing at that event, as compared with the some two hundred bishops from the eastern provinces.<sup>5</sup> In all of Greece, among the scores of Early Christian churches whose remains have been uncovered, only the basilica at Epidauros has been claimed for the fourth century.<sup>6</sup> Like the earlier converts, the majority of the fourth-century congregations most probably worshipped in private houses.

The comparative prosperity of Athens in the late classical period had been brought to an abrupt end in A.D. 267, with an unusually savage attack by the

<sup>3</sup> Gregorovius was the first, according to Strzygowski, in "Die Akropolis in altbyzantinischer Zeit," *AM*, 14 (1889), 272, note 2, to read the law in this way.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., J. B. Bury, *The History of the Later Roman Empire* (London, 1923), vol. 1, 371. For a more critical approach to the problem as it concerns the various regions of the Empire individually cf. Deichmann, *op. cit.*, 107-114.

<sup>5</sup> F. van der Meer and Christine Mohrmann, *Atlas of the Early Christian World* (London, 1958), pl. 4.

<sup>6</sup> G. Sotiriou, *Αἱ χριστιανικαὶ Θῆβαι τῆς Θεσσαλίας καὶ αἱ παλαιοχριστιανικαὶ βασιλικαὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, *AE* (1929), 198; also *ΠΔΑ*, 4 (1930), 91 ff.

barbarian Heruli, which left most of the lower city in ruins and disrupted life for a century or more.<sup>7</sup> The Agora, with its great public buildings, the Kera-meikos and the district to the south of the Acropolis had all been laid waste (fig. 1). The original defenses had been abandoned and the city had shrunk to a cramped area immediately to the north of the Acropolis, fortified by a wall composed of debris taken from the ruined buildings outside (fig. 2). The Agora remained uninhabitable, or at any rate uninhabited, until the end of the fourth century.

For a new movement with any considerable popular following, these circumstances might have been expected to create a favorable opportunity to establish itself at the expense of its rivals. Even if, as seems likely from the evidence of the lamp industry,<sup>8</sup> recovery in the city as a whole was more rapid than in the Agora, which lay in ruins until about 400, sufficient time elapsed between the destruction of the lower city and the resumption of ordinary activity to allow for a complete break with the past. When more or less normal life was resumed in Athens, Christianity was already in a favored position in the Empire as a whole; it was legally in complete control by 400, when returning prosperity encouraged a monumental building program in the city. But the Christians apparently had insufficient strength to take advantage of the situation. To be sure, the Christian community was growing. Christian symbols begin to appear in the minor arts by the middle of the fourth century, as on lamps found in the Agora (figs. 3, 4),<sup>9</sup> but less frequently than pagan motifs. Christian tombstones (fig. 5),<sup>10</sup> while attesting to a fairly large number of adherents, nevertheless suggest, by the crude carving and almost illiterate character of their inscriptions, that the Christian population was drawn largely from the humbler orders.

The Herulian destruction caused no lasting break in the study of philosophy at Athens. During the second half of the fourth century and the whole of the fifth, the fame and popularity of Athenian education continued to attract students from abroad, including some of the foremost thinkers of the time: the pagan philosopher Libanius and his pupil Julian, the future emperor; also the two Cappadocian Church Fathers, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus, whose thorough mastery of Greek literature and thought, acquired in Athens, had a profound influence on the formative stage of Christian dogma. But the Christian students were in the minority and Christian teachers rare indeed.<sup>11</sup>

Our picture of Athens in the second half of the fourth century is at present incomplete and in many ways contradictory. On the one hand, the flourishing condition of the schools suggests an active community life at well above subsistence level. On the other, there is visible proof of the destruction of a substantial part of the city and, in the case of the Agora at least, a subsequent period

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, *op. cit.*, 61 ff.

<sup>8</sup> J. Perlzweig, *The Athenian Agora*, VII, *Lamps of the Roman Period* (Princeton, 1961), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Agora inv. L 3208, L 2523.

<sup>10</sup> Agora inv. I 1657

<sup>11</sup> One of the most notable of these was Prohaeresius, who was able to arouse the enthusiasm and gratitude of such an implacable pagan as Eunapius (*Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, 485-493).

of utter desolation. This aspect is partly corroborated, for the last decade of the century, by the eyewitness testimony of Synesius, later Bishop of Cyrene, and since considerable importance has been attached to his evidence, it should be examined in some detail.

Synesius' visit to Athens probably took place between A.D. 395 and 400, when he was in his late twenties.<sup>12</sup> How long he stayed and whether he went there as a student or merely as a tourist is not known. His avowed reason for his trip, i.e., that he was tired of returning students assuming lofty airs because they had seen the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Stoa Poikile, suggests that he expected to be disappointed, and his satisfaction is apparent when he remarks that "the proconsul has taken away all the pictures from the Stoa Poikile, and has thus humiliated these men's pretensions to learning."<sup>13</sup>

At about this time, in the year 396, Alaric the Visigoth led his forces down through northern Greece and arrived outside Athens. Through the use of a judicious combination of supernatural and practical persuasion, the Athenians induced him to spare the city,<sup>14</sup> but he then proceeded to ravage all the countryside between Athens and Megara. How much of the desolation of Athens reported by Synesius was due to damage inflicted by Alaric, how much to natural decay, and how much to unfavorable comparison with the more cosmopolitan Alexandria, where he had spent the preceding years, is hard to assess. His reference to the arrogant behavior of students who had seen the Academy and the Lyceum implies that these institutions were still standing shortly before his own visit. Excavations have revealed that the Academy was completely rebuilt in the early fifth century,<sup>15</sup> leaving a period of some ten years during which it might have been destroyed, which coincides with the time both of Alaric's invasion and Synesius' visit. Lying directly in Alaric's path on the way to Megara, it could hardly have escaped destruction and the sight of its ruins might well have contributed to Synesius' disillusionment with Athens.<sup>16</sup>

The beginning of the fifth century witnessed a sudden rush of building activity in Athens. Its immediate cause has not been established with certainty, but H. A. Thompson suggests that it was connected with Alaric's invasion and represents "not an expansion from the core but a contraction from the periphery inwards."<sup>17</sup> Some of the new construction within the city may have replaced buildings destroyed in the environs; alleviation of the Gothic threat may have provided further impetus, and the interest of a public-spirited high official such as Herculus, pretorian prefect in 408-412,<sup>18</sup> could account for the monumental character of Athenian building at this time. It is worthy of note that

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ch. Lacombrade, *Synésios de Cyrène, hellène et chrétien* (Paris, 1951), 74-75, and Augustine Fitzgerald, *The Letters of Synesios of Cyrene* (London, 1926), 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ep.* 54; cf. also *Ep.* 135.

<sup>14</sup> Zosimus, iv. 18; v. 5.

<sup>15</sup> *PAE* (1950), 54; *PAÄ*, 8 (1933), 243.

<sup>16</sup> For the more profound philosophical aspects of Synesius' lack of sympathy with Athens, cf. H. I. Marrou, "Synesius of Cyrene and Alexandrian Neoplatonism," in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. by Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford, 1963), 126-150.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, 67.

<sup>18</sup> For Herculus and his activities, see *infra*, p. 192.

Herculius was responsible for the construction of an aqueduct in Megara,<sup>19</sup> perhaps a replacement for one destroyed or damaged by Alaric's forces.

Much of the architectural activity of this time was centered around the site of the Agora. The accumulated rubbish of the past century was cleared away and replaced by a large and imposing complex which occupied the entire center of the square and incorporated the foundations of the Odeion of Agrippa and some lesser buildings (fig. 6).<sup>20</sup> The date of construction can be fairly securely fixed, by a considerable number of coins of Arcadius and Honorius, to about A.D. 400. The plan, with a large gymnasium, baths, and smaller rooms suitable for lectures, has led to the identification of the complex with one of the schools of philosophy, thus continuing the educational tradition established in this area with the construction of the Gymnasium of Ptolemy, immediately to the south.<sup>21</sup> The quality of the masonry, even in the basement rooms, and of the architectural ornament, such as one of the pilaster capitals (fig. 7),<sup>22</sup> entitle the complex to rank among the major Athenian productions of the fifth century A.D. Similar, although less elaborate, structures have been found immediately south of the Agora<sup>23</sup> and also to the south of the Acropolis. Their pagan character is well demonstrated by their sculptural decoration, for example, the Giants and Tritons, salvaged from the Odeion of Agrippa and reused conspicuously in the Agora complex. At about the same time the archon Phaedrus provided a new stage for the Theater of Dionysos, equally pagan in inspiration (fig. 8), probably to repair Herulian damage.

The tenacity of the pagan tradition, even after the fruitless command of the Edict of Theodosius for the destruction of the temples, was due in large measure to the influence of the Neo-Platonic Academy, which continued to be the dominant factor in Athenian life until its obligatory closing in A.D. 529, by decree of Justinian. The reason is not hard to find. Apart from the natural proclivities of the Greeks toward pagan philosophy, the Academy represented the only stable institution of the time. For the century and a half of its official existence, a period in which contemporary historians generally ignored Greece, the records preserve an unbroken sequence of Heads of the Academy, from Plutarch, its founder, who died at an advanced age in 432, to Damascius, who was in office in 529 and who, with others, preferred exile in the Persian court to renunciation of his pagan beliefs.

Not only did the leading philosophers exert a powerful influence on education; they took an active part in civic affairs as well. The writings of the Neo-Platonists and inscriptions found in Athens shed some light on their relations with the magistrates and demonstrate that, however recondite their philosophy, they had a surprisingly shrewd practical sense. The wealth of the city seems to have been largely in their hands, derived partly from their extensive

<sup>19</sup> *CIG*, 1081.

<sup>20</sup> Thompson, *op. cit.*, 67-68, and *idem*, "The Odeion in the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia*, 19 (1950), 134-141.

<sup>21</sup> For this new identification of the buildings, previously known as the Middle and South Stoa, and related structures, see H. A. Thompson, *AJA*, 69 (1965), 177.

<sup>22</sup> Agora Inv. A 2268.

<sup>23</sup> Thompson, "Activities in the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia*, 28 (1959), 104-105.

land holdings but frequently supplemented by bequests from their admirers.<sup>24</sup> They lived well, in their imposing houses embellished with polished marble,<sup>25</sup> but also they were generous in giving financial aid to civic enterprises. About A.D. 400, for example, Iamblichos, grandson of the famous Syrian Neo-Platonist of the same name, was honored for having helped to build new walls and towers for the city's defense.<sup>26</sup> Proclus, the most distinguished of all the Athenian Neo-Platonists, and head of the Academy from about 450 to his death in 485, was frequently consulted on civic matters, and bequeathed a large part of his estate to the city of Athens.<sup>27</sup> But Plutarch, the founder of the Neo-Platonic Academy, apparently earned the greatest gratitude for having three times defrayed the costs of transporting the Panathenaic ship up to the temple, thereby "expending his entire fortune."<sup>28</sup>

In the early fifth century the Academy was fortunate in the appointment of an enlightened and well disposed official, Herculus, as Prefect of Illyricum.<sup>29</sup> Although the Prefecture covered a wide area and its seat was either Sirmium, near the Danube, or Thessalonica, Herculus seems to have spent much time in Athens and not only to have cultivated cordial relations with the philosophers, but also to have helped them in material ways. For it was surely in recognition of some substantial benefaction to the Academy that Plutarch was able to spare enough from his Panathenaic expenditures to erect what must have been an imposing statue of Herculus in a most conspicuous position, at the entrance of the Library of Hadrian,<sup>30</sup> and that another philosopher, Apronian, dedicated a statue to him on the Acropolis, "beside the statue of Athena Promachos."<sup>31</sup> A statue of a high official of the period was found in the Gymnasium complex of the Agora (fig. 9).<sup>32</sup> Being headless, it is unidentifiable, but it might be conjectured that this is yet another statue of Herculus set up in gratitude for his enlightened interest in education. These dedications seem to leave no doubt that Herculus, the highest official in the Balkan Peninsula, whether nominally pagan or Christian, felt no embarrassment in betraying his pagan sympathies. Another high magistrate, Theagenes, who served a term as archon, was known as a benefactor of the Academy.<sup>33</sup> The lines between pagan and Chris-

<sup>24</sup> *Vita Isidori*, 9419ff.

<sup>25</sup> Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, 483 (Julianus).

<sup>26</sup> A. E. Raubitschek, "Iamblichus at Athens," *Hesperia*, 33 (1964), 63-68.

<sup>27</sup> *Vita Procli*, 14.15.

<sup>28</sup> *IG*, II<sup>2</sup>, 3818.

<sup>29</sup> See *supra*, p. 190.

<sup>30</sup> *IG*, II<sup>2</sup>, 4224.

<sup>31</sup> *IG*, II<sup>2</sup>, 4225.

<sup>32</sup> E. B. Harrison, *The Athenian Agora*, I, *Portrait Sculpture* (Princeton, 1953), pls. 41, 42; *Agora Inv.* S 657.

<sup>33</sup> The date of Theagenes' archonship is unknown. P. Graindor, "Pamprépios (?) et Théagénès," *Byzantion*, 4 ([1927-8], 474), puts it shortly before 450, which would have been early in his career, for he appears to have continued to hold some influential position until much later. He is represented in the *Vita Isidori* as taking a prominent part in the selection of a successor to Proclus, *ca.* 480-485. Although he was closely connected with the Academy by marriage and by ties of friendship, it was apparently as an outsider that he was consulted. Photius calls him a Christian who passed as a philosopher (*RE*, V, A, 2, 1346), but in the *Vita Isidori* he appears as a pagan who, toward the end of his career, came to some terms with the Christians for reasons of policy. This seems a truer appraisal, since it is hardly likely that a Christian would have been admitted to the inner councils of the Academy.

tian in fourth- and fifth-century Athens were perhaps not always as sharply drawn as might be expected, and at least some of the officials of both church and state seem to have been chosen for their skill in diplomacy, rather than for the strength of their convictions.<sup>34</sup> The fact that Herculus, friend and benefactor of the staunchest opponents of Christianity, could also receive an affectionate letter from John Chrysostom<sup>35</sup> lends color to this view. It is not surprising, therefore, that pagan institutions in Athens, instead of giving way to the establishment of a Christian city, were either continued or revived, that the Council of the Areopagus was functioning at least as late as A.D. 373,<sup>36</sup> and that the Panathenaic Festival was being celebrated regularly, and with some splendor, in the fifth century.

The philosophers have contributed to our meager knowledge not only of the history of fifth-century Athens, but also of its topography. From a reference in Marinus' *Vita Procli*,<sup>37</sup> we are able to localize the official residence of the head of the Academy with some precision. Marinus describes Proclus' house as being near the Theater and Temple of Dionysos, in the neighborhood of the Temple of Asklepios and visible from the Acropolis. Proclus is said to have enjoyed it both for its location and because it had been occupied by his predecessors Plutarch and Syrianus, thus establishing its official character. A large building answering to these specifications was discovered a few years ago by the Greek Archaeological Service.<sup>38</sup> Its plan conforms to what we know from elsewhere of the type of building used by the schools and, like the others, its construction may be dated to about A.D. 400.<sup>39</sup> A portrait, now in the Acropolis Museum (fig. 10), is said to have been found in or near the building.<sup>40</sup> Once identified with Proclus, it is now thought to be somewhat earlier, probably about the beginning of the fifth century.<sup>41</sup> It is plainly of a philosopher and from its place of finding might be associated with the Academy. Possibly it is Plutarch himself.

By the middle of the fifth century, increasing imperial concern for enforcing the acceptance of Christianity had shaken the complacency of pagan Athenians enough to recommend caution. But, although during the second half of the century no new pagan construction seems to have been undertaken, the buildings erected in the first half were kept in repair and were undoubtedly sufficient

<sup>34</sup> H. I. Marrou, *op. cit.*, 142, makes this point in connection with the elevation of Synesius to the bishopric of Cyrene.

<sup>35</sup> PG, 52, col. 723.

<sup>36</sup> IG, II<sup>2</sup>, 4222 honors Rufius Festus as proconsul and Areopagite.

<sup>37</sup> Chap. 29.

<sup>38</sup> *Ergon* (1955), 5-11.

<sup>39</sup> The physical relation between the Neo-Platonic Academy and the Academy of Plato must remain obscure until a complete study is made of the fifth-century reconstruction of Plato's Academy by the Kephissos. In the meantime, cf. J. Travlos, *Πολιοδομική*, 134; Ph. Stavropoulos, *Μεγάλη Ἑλληνική Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία*, Suppl. 22; R. E. Wycherley, *Greece and Rome*, 2nd. ser., 8, no. 2 (Oct. 1961), 152-163; 9, no. 1 (March, 1962), 2-21 (with bibliography on the schools). The building under discussion might be the house of Proclus, the home of the Neo-Platonic Academy, or one of the houses of sophists which did duty also as classrooms (cf. Eunapius, *loc. cit.*).

<sup>40</sup> *ΠΔΕ* (1955), 49.

<sup>41</sup> Acropolis Museum, no. 1313; G. Dontas, "Kopf eines Neuplatonikers," *AM*, 69/70 (1954-5), 147-152.

to satisfy all needs and to monopolize the center of the city. The Christians, too, felt similar caution and, not yet sure of their ground, avoided the center of the city in their intensive building activities of the second half of the century.<sup>42</sup>

Tradition credits Eudocia, the Athenian-born wife of Theodosius II, with giving impetus to the Christian building activity of the fifth century. Daughter of the sophist Leontius and named Athenais at birth, she renounced paganism, whether from policy or conviction, and lent active support to the state religion. The basilica by the Ilissos, probably one of the earliest churches in Athens, is commonly attributed to her influence, and there may have been others. Exclusive of ancient buildings turned into churches and of caves in the Acropolis slopes known to have been used as Christian shrines, the existence of fourteen Early Christian churches (that is, of the fifth and sixth centuries) is attested either by literary evidence or by excavation, and this is probably only a fraction of the total.<sup>43</sup> Few of these buildings survived the invasions of the next two or three centuries and none remain standing now, but the many bits of architectural ornament, later used as construction material in houses and fortifications, give some idea of the activity among the Early Christians of Athens.

Two apparent exceptions to the Christian avoidance of the center of the city deserve careful examination. The churches in the Theater of Dionysos and the Temple of Asklepios have been assigned to the fifth century and, if this dating can be upheld, the theory of pagan and Christian spheres of influence within the city would fall to the ground.<sup>44</sup> The excavation of the Asklepieion in 1876,<sup>45</sup> with the single purpose of exposing the remains of the classical period and recovering ancient inscriptions and other marbles from the later masonry, effectively destroyed most of the architectural evidence for the date of the construction of the Early Christian church. But the answer lies, in the view of the present writer, in the *Vita Procli*, in the same passage commonly used to support a date *ca.* A.D. 450. Marinus' circumstantial account, written within a year of Proclus' death in 485, presents a picture, which cannot be ignored, of an area centered around the sanctuaries of Asklepios and Dionysos and dominated by the Academy. The presence of two churches in the very heart of this precinct, one of them actually over the ruins of the Temple of Asklepios, would be in such serious conflict with this conception as to demand a reappraisal of the evidence.<sup>46</sup>

The case for a mid-fifth-century date for the church in the Asklepieion rests largely on the prevailing belief in the prompt and rigid enforcement of the Edict of Theodosius and on the common interpretation of the famous passage in the *Vita Procli* recounting Proclus' visit to the temple to pray for the health of Asklepieia.<sup>47</sup> The episode, it is argued, must have occurred about

<sup>42</sup> Travlos, *op. cit.*, chap. vii and pl. vii.

<sup>43</sup> E. P. Blegen, "News Items from Athens," *AJA*, 50 (1946), 373-374.

<sup>44</sup> J. Travlos, 'Η παλαιοχριστιανική βασιλική τοῦ Διονυσιακοῦ Θεάτρου, *AE* (1953-4), B', 301-316; 'Η παλαιοχριστιανική βασιλική τοῦ Ἀσκληπιείου τῶν Ἀθηνῶν, *AE* (1939-41), 34-68.

<sup>45</sup> *PAE* (1876), 20ff; *BCH*, 1 (1877), 169-170, and pls. vi-vii.

<sup>46</sup> Travlos, who proposed a mid-fifth-century date for both buildings (Πολεοδομική, 138-140), has recently told me that he now regards the question as open.

<sup>47</sup> Chap. 29.

450 because of its relative position in the narrative, and the words καὶ γὰρ ἡτύχει τοῦτου ἢ πόλις τότε, καὶ εἶχεν ἔτι ἀπόρρητον τό τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἱερόν imply that the destruction of the temple followed almost immediately after the prayer in the temple, in accordance with the provisions of the Edict of Theodosius. Because of the great amount of ancient material used in its construction, the erection of the church must have followed closely on the destruction of the temple.

The *Vita Procli*, however, is chronological only in broad outline: Proclus' early years, his arrival in Athens, and his death. All else is subordinate to the main theme, the subtitle of the biography, Περὶ Εὐδαιμονίας, and events in his life are quoted only to illustrate particular aspects of his character, in this case his "theurgic" activities. Since Proclus is represented as already living in the house of his predecessors, the earliest possible date for the prayer in the temple is *ca.* 450, when he succeeded to the chair of the Athenian School. But in this case considerable time must have elapsed between the prayer and the destruction of the temple (there is nothing in the text to suggest the contrary), for it is impossible to reconcile Proclus' enjoyment of his house for its proximity to the two sanctuaries with this catastrophic turn of events which would have deprived him of that enjoyment and have mocked all his beliefs by the erection of a church on the very spot. Moreover, it may be questioned whether the accepted reading of the word ἀπόρρητον as "not yet destroyed"<sup>48</sup> is correct, and whether it should not instead be taken as "not yet pillaged,"<sup>49</sup> in which case the only desecration to the building during Proclus' life was the removal of the statue and other cult objects.

Proclus was a loyal citizen who, as we have seen, gave generously of his time and substance for the welfare of his city; it is hard to believe that the authorities would have provoked so eminent and well-disposed a man by arrogant acts. More probably, the Temple of Asklepios, under pressure of the imperial edicts, was deconsecrated, but not destroyed, shortly before Proclus' death in 485, and its destruction, whether at the hands of the Christians, by earthquake, or from natural decay, occurred toward the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth, to be followed after the closing of the schools in 529 by the construction of the church midst the temple's ruins.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> E.g., in the translation by L. J. Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus* (New York, 1949).

<sup>49</sup> Liddell and Scott give both meanings. The verb is used in the latter sense, and in a similar context in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, xii, 523, πορθεῖν ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν τὰ ἀγάλματα.

<sup>50</sup> A. Xyngopoulos, in Χριστιανικὸν Ἀσκληπιεῖον (*AE* [1915], 53) following Gregorovius, and Travlos (*AE* [1939-41], 63) hold the Christians responsible, but the idea of the Christians savagely attacking all sanctuaries of Asklepios because of their addiction to magic arts (cf. E. J. de Waele, "The Sanctuary of Asklepios and Hygeia at Corinth," *AJA*, 37 [1933], 435-437) is unconvincing; Deichmann, who places the destruction at the end of the fifth century, attributes it to an earthquake (*AM*, 63-64 [1938-9], 137-138). Of nine earthquakes listed by V. Grumel ("Traité d'études byzantines," *La chronologie* [Paris, 1958], 476-481) for the period 450-485, none is mentioned as having affected mainland Greece; it is possible that the earthquake recorded in Constantinople in 480 might be the "miraculous" earthquake mentioned in the *Vita Isidori* (Asmus, 96, 5) in connection with the strategems preceding the choice of a successor to Proclus which seem to have begun as much as five years before his death. The earthquakes in Greece in the Middle Ages have apparently suffered the same neglect from historians as have other events. It must be remembered, however, that Athens is much less liable to earthquakes than is the rest of Greece. Any minor tremor might be useful to prove divine anger, approval, or concern, but earthquakes severe enough to cause substantial physical damage are extremely rare in Athenian history.

The topographical argument in favor of a sixth-century date applies equally well to the church in the Theater of Dionysos; the archaeological evidence is inconclusive as between the fifth and sixth.<sup>51</sup> The building should probably be regarded as more or less contemporary with the church in the Asklepieion.

One other building may be considered in this connection: the quatrefoil building in the courtyard of the Library of Hadrian (fig. 11). First published as a church,<sup>52</sup> it was so accepted until Travlos argued convincingly against the identification.<sup>53</sup> Apart from the question of the likelihood of a Christian church being built in the center of Athens at the beginning of the fifth century, Travlos made a strong case for the close relationship between the building and the dedication to Hercules built into the wall near the entrance.<sup>54</sup> He in fact suggested that Hercules himself erected the building either as a reading room for the Library or, more probably, as lecture hall and class rooms for one of the schools presumably housed in the Library; hence the gratitude of the sophists. Travlos' investigations confirmed Sisson's dating of *ca.* A.D. 400; the structure thus takes its place in the considerable building program of the early years of the fifth century: the Gymnasium complex in the Agora, the contemporary building in the Metroon,<sup>55</sup> "Proclus' house" south of the Acropolis, the school to the south of the Agora, the stage of Phaedrus in the Theatre of Dionysos, the building dedicated to Arcadius and Honorius by the prefect Aetius in 401,<sup>56</sup> the many baths, gymnasia, etc., either newly built or refurbished in the Hadrianic extension of Athens and the complete rebuilding of Plato's Academy.

But the question of the original purpose of the structure in the Library of Hadrian, whether secular or ecclesiastical, remains unsolved. Its similarity to many churches of the centralized plan has offered support in favor of an ecclesiastical origin.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, ecclesiastical architecture has no monopoly on the trefoil or quatrefoil plan.<sup>58</sup> In view of the inconclusive nature of the architectural evidence, the relation to its immediate surroundings assumes greater weight. Plutarch's statue of Hercules<sup>59</sup> stood in a commanding position at the entrance to the Library and a visitor, as he passed it, would have been immediately confronted by the quatrefoil building which dominated the whole courtyard. The easiest explanation is that this was the benefaction which prompted the presentation of the statue, and if this was so, it would rule out the possibility that the building was used as a Christian church.

<sup>51</sup> Travlos, *AE* (1953-4), 301-316.

<sup>52</sup> M. A. Sisson, "The Stoa of Hadrian of Athens," *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 11 (1929), 50ff.

<sup>53</sup> Ἀνασκαφαὶ ἐν τῇ βιβλιοθήκῃ τοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ, *IIAE* (1950), 41-63, with earlier references.

<sup>54</sup> See *supra*.

<sup>55</sup> H. A. Thompson, "Buildings on the West Side of the Agora," *Hesperia*, 6 (1937), 200.

<sup>56</sup> *IG*, II<sup>2</sup>, 5205.

<sup>57</sup> E.g., in addition to Sisson, P. Graindor, *Athènes sous Hadrien* (Cairo, 1934), p. 245; G. Sotiriou, *AE* (1929), 173-174; P. Lemerle, *Revue des études byzantines*, 13 (1955), 224. Travlos, in Πολυοδομική, 139, note 2, reverts to this view, but, in my opinion, fails to override his own persuasive earlier arguments.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. I. Lavin, "The House of the Lord," *Art Bulletin*, XLIV, 1 (1962), 1-27.

<sup>59</sup> See *supra*.

The prosperity which had begun again for Athens at the beginning of the fifth century lasted through the first quarter of the sixth. During this time pagans and Christians seem to have adopted a policy of more or less peaceful coexistence during which the balance gradually shifted from pagan to Christian. It is probable that by the end of the fifth century all the temples had been deconsecrated, but there is no evidence of any having been transformed into a church. Although the Christian population was increasing in numbers and influence,<sup>60</sup> Justinian's arbitrary closing of the schools in 529 is clear proof that paganism in Athens was still by no means a dead issue. Thus suddenly deprived of its most marketable commodity, philosophy, the city rapidly lost also its chief source of revenue, the students who had continued to flock from all parts of the Empire to its most distinguished seat of higher learning. The buildings which had housed the schools to the south of the Acropolis, and especially the Gymnasium complex in the Agora were allowed to fall into disrepair. How much Christian construction was undertaken in the sixth century is uncertain, but there are some indications that the often-quoted remark of Procopius that "in all Greece and not least in Athens itself no public building was restored nor could any useful thing be done" should not be taken too literally or too extensively.<sup>61</sup>

With the mounting threat of Slavic invasion added to the gradual decay brought about by neglect of the pagan buildings, there was small chance that Athens would regain the prestige or prosperity enjoyed before 529. The threat, in fact, soon became reality and sometime between 580 and 585 the city suffered a general disaster. Mediaeval historians are usually indifferent to occurrences in Athens (Theophanes makes no mention of the city in the sixth or seventh century, and in the fifth only by implication), including this calamity of the 580's, but the event left its own documentation in the form of burned debris and hoards of coins in scattered areas, both north and south of the Acropolis.<sup>62</sup> The invaders, like their predecessors the Heruli, evidently made no attempt to occupy the city, but contented themselves with leaving a mass of ruins which lay more or less undisturbed until the beginning of the seventh century.

Although the Slavs overran the entire Balkan peninsula in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, it is improbable that Athens itself was ever occupied during this period.<sup>63</sup> It was in Byzantine hands and evidently regarded as safe in 662/3 when Constans II wintered there, and although there is evidence

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Damascius' strictures on Theagenes' opportunism in "slipping into the life of the majority of the people," i.e., the Christians (*Vita Isidori*, 93).

<sup>61</sup> *Anecdota*, xxvi, 33. (tr. by H. B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, 1935]). This remark was prompted by the actions of the Logothete Alexander who transferred to the imperial treasury the public funds of all the cities of Greece on the pretext that they were to be used for the maintenance of troops in Greece. Although Justinian is represented as concurring in these measures, Procopius contradicts his own testimony with the statement, often confirmed by actual remains, that Justinian rebuilt the walls of the cities of Greece (*De aedificiis*, iv, 2, 24).

<sup>62</sup> Thompson, *JRS*, 49 (1959), 70; D. M. Metcalf, "The Slavonic Threat to Greece," *Hesperia*, 31 (1962), 134-157; A. W. Parsons, "A Roman Water Mill in the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia*, 5 (1936), 70-90.

<sup>63</sup> For a recent discussion of the nature and extent of the invasions, cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "Byzantium in the Seventh Century," *DOP*, 13 (1959), 3-21, esp. 4-7.

of acute danger during the reign of Heraclius,<sup>64</sup> there is no sign of another break in the continuity of life such as occurred in the 580's. Life was admittedly at a low ebb, but there is mounting evidence of a period of recovery in the seventh century which delayed the onset of the darkest ages until toward the end of the century. The volume of coins of Phocas, Heraclius, Constans II, and Constantine IV found in the Athenian Agora (a total of 1127 for the period 602-685) presents an impressive contrast to the scant twenty-five recorded for the twenty years immediately preceding, when Athens was suffering from the aftermath of the Slavic invasion.<sup>65</sup>

The numismatic evidence from the Agora is corroborated by the discovery of a considerable number of bronze belt buckles of the type commonly known as "Avar" or "Bulgaric" (fig. 12).<sup>66</sup> Of the twenty-four buckles found in the Agora area, nine were found in graves on the Areopagus, two in disturbed graves in the Hephaisteion, and the remainder over or near the Panathenaic Way in contexts predominantly of the seventh century. The coincidence of these buckles with the route of Constans and his army has already been remarked,<sup>67</sup> and from the heavy concentration along the Panathenaic Way, in conjunction with the large number of coins of Constans, we may infer that this was a road much frequented by the troops stationed in Athens, perhaps on their way to garrison duty on the Acropolis. The humble tile graves on the Areopagus, in which several of the buckles were found, might well be part of the military cemetery associated with the garrison.

From close by the Panathenaic Way, in the southeast corner of the Agora, came a bronze harness ornament in the form of a bird, with two large letters, *καρφα omega*, in reverse, and an abbreviation sign (fig. 13).<sup>68</sup> A similar ornament was brought to light in the same vicinity, "near the Stoa of Attalos," during the excavations of the Greek Archaeological Society in 1867.<sup>69</sup> Since the style of the ornaments fits well with the time of Constans, it is perhaps not too rash to suppose that they were emblems of the imperial horse, like the N on the bridles of Napoleon's cavalry. The hypothesis is strengthened by the discovery of an apparently identical example in a village south of Almyros, on the slopes of Mt. Othrys, on the Gulf of Volo.<sup>70</sup> According to the chroniclers,

<sup>64</sup> D. M. Metcalf, "The Aegean Coastlands under Threat: Some Coins and Coin Hoards of Heraclius," *BSA*, 57 (1962), 14-23.

<sup>65</sup> M. Thompson, *The Athenian Agora*, II, *Coins from the Roman through the Venetian Period* (Princeton, 1954), 69-71.

<sup>66</sup> For the voluminous literature on these buckles, cf. K. M. Setton, "The Bulgars in the Balkans and the Occupation of Corinth in the Seventh Century," *Speculum*, 25 (1950), 523-525; 542-543 (with earlier references); and "Constans II and the Capture of Corinth by the Onogurs," *Speculum*, 27 (1952), 351-362; P. Charanis, "On the Capture of Corinth by the Onogurs," *Speculum*, 27 (1952), 343-350; G. D. Weinberg, *Corinth*, XII, *The Minor Objects* (Princeton, 1952), 266 ff. and pl. 114.

<sup>67</sup> Setton, *Speculum*, 25 (1950), 523-524.

<sup>68</sup> Agora, Inv. B 96.

<sup>69</sup> *AE* (1872), 404 and pl. 58, 9.

<sup>70</sup> N. I. Giannopoulos, Βυζαντινὰ σφραγίδες ἀνέκδοτοι προερχόμενοι ἐκ τῆς ἐπαρχίας Ἀλμυροῦ, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 18 (1909), 503. Both of these ornaments are published as stamps, but this identification is ruled out in the case of the Agora example by the undercutting of the letters; it also leaves unexplained the attachment holes found in the two Athenian specimens at least. The sketchily drawn illustration of the piece from Almyros does not show this feature, but one suspects its presence.

Constans followed the shore route on his way to Athens.<sup>71</sup> With the Slavs in control of most of the interior of Greece,<sup>72</sup> both stationary garrisons and mobile troops would have been essential for the protection of the imperial retinue, whether it accompanied the army or traveled on the ships which were to carry it on the next stage of the journey. A site overlooking the plain of Almyros and the Gulf of Volo would have been a highly suitable location for such a garrison.<sup>73</sup>

Theophanes, who devotes most of a chapter to Constans' inglorious end in a Sicilian bath,<sup>74</sup> dismisses his whole journey from Constantinople to Syracuse in two lines: τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει καταλιπὼν ὁ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντινούπολιν μετέστη ἐν Συρακούσῃ τῆς Σικελίας, βουλῆθεις ἐν Ῥώμῃ τὴν βασιλείαν μεταστῆσαι,<sup>75</sup> with no mention of Thessalonica, Athens, Tarentum, or Rome. In none of the chronicles is there more than the briefest mention of Athens, and yet for a whole winter it must have been virtually the capital of the Empire, with a large number of court officials in addition to the military. The Byzantine court could never belong without ceremonial, even when in transit, and the account in the *Liber Pontificalis* of the exchanges of visits between Emperor and Pope makes it clear that Constans' retinue was well equipped for ceremonies.<sup>76</sup> The presence of a large imperial train would have demanded many services of a more practical nature, and this implies the existence of a fairly prosperous community.

In no part of Athens where excavations have been conducted have traces of any monumental building of the seventh century been uncovered, and the physical appearance of the city at that time must for the present remain largely conjectural. Where Constans resided or held court or where his troops were quartered are questions to which there are still no answers. Justinian's wall may have suffered sufficiently in the invasion of the 580's to make it advisable to withdraw once more within the late Roman fortification<sup>77</sup> where, possibly, one or another of the large fifth-century buildings was still, or had been made, habitable.

Even apart from the court, life in Athens was not so barren as is frequently believed. The teaching of philosophy had crept back at least to some extent, probably completely Christianized, and the Athenian schools once more had the distinction of sending an eminent churchman to a high ecclesiastical post: the Cilician Theodore of Tarsus, who studied in Athens before going on to an illustrious career as Archbishop of Canterbury (669–690).<sup>78</sup>

<sup>71</sup> E.g., Paulus Diaconus, in *De gestis Langobardorum*, V, 6 (PL, 95, 598A): *per littoralia iter habens Athenas venit; indeque mare transgressus Tarentum applicuit.*

<sup>72</sup> Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Two almost identical examples, said to have been found in Constantinople, are in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. John de Menil in Houston. I am indebted to the owners for permission to mention these unpublished pieces and to Mr. Marvin C. Ross not only for calling my attention to them, but also for a photograph. The attachment holes are present in both cases.

<sup>74</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), p. 351 (A.M. 6160).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348, A.M. 6153.

<sup>76</sup> *LP*, I, 343 (Vitalian).

<sup>77</sup> Travlos, *Πολιοδομική*, p. 149.

<sup>78</sup> This information is based on the authority of Pope Zacharias, writing fifty years after the death of Theodore: . . . *et novissime tuis temporibus Theodorus ex Graeco Latinus ante philosophus et Athenis eruditus* (PL, 89, 943C.). Cf. also the Venerable Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, bk. iv, chap.

Against this background of relations between pagans and Christians the defiance of the Edict of Theodosius is understandable, particularly since enforcement of the order was entrusted to the magistrates. In this case, as good Athenians, they would have had no great enthusiasm for performing their duties. Moreover, the decree must be considered, not as an isolated order but in its context, as one of a long series of measures dealing with the outward aspects of the transition from paganism to Christianity. These differed in severity according to circumstances, and offered a diversity of solutions, including destruction, neutralization by the removal of the cult statues, and occasionally conversion to public (but never specifically Christian) use, in no logical sequence. Geographical and also topographical considerations evidently played a part, as, for instance, in two decrees issued by Arcadius and Honorius in the same year, A.D. 399: "No man ... shall attempt to destroy temples which are empty of illicit things" (Padua);<sup>79</sup> but six weeks earlier, "temples ... in the country districts ... shall be torn down without disturbance or tumult (Damascus)."<sup>80</sup> This flexibility suggests that in the edict of 435 the phrase *praecepto magistratuum* was inserted as a loophole to allow the magistrates to exercise their discretion. The provision against sacrifices was constant; it was both easier to enforce and struck more directly at the heart of the matter. Concern for the buildings themselves was incidental, and often utilitarian.<sup>81</sup> Those buildings which weathered the storm of 435 (if, indeed, it was a storm) found protection in an edict of Majorian, in 458, against using ancient buildings as quarries: "buildings that have been founded by the ancients as temples, or other monuments constructed for public use or pleasure shall not be destroyed by any person."<sup>82</sup>

Toward the end of Proclus' life it was becoming clear that paganism was doomed. His dream of Athena coming to live with him when τό ἄγαλμα αὐτῆς τὸ ἐν Παρθενῶνι τέως ἱδρυμένον ὑπὸ τῶν καὶ τὰ ἀκίνητα κινούντων μετεφέρετο places the removal of the Parthenos and, therefore, the deconsecration of the Parthenon sometime before 485.<sup>83</sup> It was probably about this same time that the cult statue was removed from the temple of Asklepios.<sup>84</sup> Theagenes, archon

1: ... *Theodorus, natus Tarso Ciliciae, vir et saeculari et divina literatura, et Graece instructus et Latine*.... Some slight scepticism might be retained as to whether Theodore actually studied at Athens, or whether the prestige of Athenian education was still so great as to cause its bestowal, *honoris causa*, on a man who had achieved such distinction. One would like to think that the credentials were earned legitimately. Another seventh-century man, St. Gislénus, is credited with having studied in Athens: ... τῇ εὐγενεστάτῃ τῶν πόλεων τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἥτις προσέφερεν εἰς τὰ ἔθνη πάσης γλώσσης τὸ ἄνθος τῆς γλωττίας (*Gesta Episcoporum Camaracensium*, I, 409, quoted by F. Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Athen im Mittelalter* [Stuttgart, 1889], I, 99). Gislénus is also said to have written to King Dagobert: *Exsul et peregrinus sum et in hac partes de terra longinqua veni, h.e. de Athenis, nobilissima Graecorum urbe*. (*Acta Sanctorum*, October, vol. 4, 1030). But the report cannot be traced back further than the tenth century.

<sup>79</sup> *Cod. Theod.*, xvi. 10.18. All translations are from *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, ed. by Clyde Pharr (Princeton, 1952).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi. 10.16.

<sup>81</sup> As Deichmann observed, once the symbols were removed, the shell of the building ceased to have any significance (*JdI*, 54 [1939], 114).

<sup>82</sup> *Novels of Majorian*, 4.1.

<sup>83</sup> *Vita Procli*, 30.

<sup>84</sup> See *supra*.

and benefactor of the Academy, who is also represented as something of an opportunist, toward the end of his career, *ca.* 480–485, found it politic to avoid giving provocation to the Christians,<sup>85</sup> but that paganism was still a powerful force is evident from the obligatory closing of the schools in 529. Failing architectural evidence to the contrary, therefore, it seems unlikely that the conversion of the temples followed immediately after deconsecration. Immediate rededication would have been distasteful to the Christians and offensive to the pagans, and since the Christians were already amply provided with places of worship, there was no reason to provoke inevitable friction by such a blatant act. It is far more probable that during the dying years of paganism the temples were left as a spiritual no-man's land, untended and allowed to fall into decay.<sup>86</sup>

The zeal with which the classically-oriented archaeologists of the nineteenth century stripped away from Athenian temples all possible reminders of their post-classical history has rendered unduly complicated the task of dating their conversion. The nature of the required alterations made it impossible to eradicate completely all traces and these, supplemented by descriptions and drawings by the early travelers, have sometimes made it possible to reconstruct the general appearance of both exterior and interior. But the systematic removal, without recording, of wall masonry and, in many cases, even of foundations, destroyed at the same time almost all chronological evidence.

The process of transformation consisted of two, perhaps three, stages: deconsecration by means of the removal of the cult statue and other pagan trappings; possibly an intermediate period when the building was used as a place of worship without any structural alteration; and finally, architectural remodeling to conform to the demands of the Christian liturgy, i.e., reorientation, involving the construction of an apse at the east end and a new entrance at the west end. The middle phase, by its very nature, leaves no physical traces and there is, so far as I know, no sure evidence of its reality in any Athenian building.

Of the three major temples in Athens known to have been turned into churches, namely, the Parthenon, Erechtheion, and Hephaisteion, the Parthenon alone drew the attention of the later writers. But all the descriptions are late, the earliest being that of Nicolo de Martoni, who visited the building in 1395;<sup>87</sup> their authors were primarily concerned with the interior embellishments and shed no light on the date of conversion. Deichmann, in his detailed analysis of the building,<sup>88</sup> found the archaeological evidence so meager that he could only assign a *terminus ante quem* of 694, the date of the first surviving Christian graffito.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> *Vita Isidori*, ed. by Asmus, p. 20.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., the temple of Asklepios. This might also account for the corrosion on the floor of the Parthenon, indicating disrepair and a period of abandonment, observed by Deichmann ("Die Basilika im Parthenon," *AM*, 63–64 [1938–9], 127).

<sup>87</sup> For the later history of the Parthenon, cf. A. Michaelis, *Der Parthenon* (1871); also G. Sotiriou, *EMME*, I, 36 and K. Setton, *Speculum*, 19 (1944), 198–201.

<sup>88</sup> *AM*, 63–64 (1938–9), 127–139.

<sup>89</sup> *CIG*, IV, 9350.

The Erechtheion is a little less elusive. Some remains of its Christian phase survived the nineteenth-century austerity to contribute to the study of the building carried out by the American School of Classical Studies.<sup>90</sup> The excavators found the later construction crude, with many careless details and with an inconsistent use of materials, e.g., poros in the south aisle, marble in the north. "It is hard to associate such methods with the age of Justinian even in a provincial city like Athens; they belong rather to the deep decline of the late sixth and seventh centuries."<sup>91</sup> The single carved slab of the *templon* preserved almost complete (fig. 14) corroborates this impression; with its flat, angular carving and eclectic use of motifs, it could hardly be dated before the seventh century.

With the temple of Hephaistos, the so-called Theseum (fig. 15), we are more fortunate in that the later accretions connected with the remodeling were recorded before being removed<sup>92</sup> and in some cases, e.g., the barrel vault, even allowed to remain. Re-examination of the evidence thus preserved suggests that the fourth- to fifth-century date generally assigned to the conversion of the temple on the basis of the carved ornament be revised. The various aspects of the remodeling have been fully presented elsewhere<sup>93</sup> and need be recapitulated here only very briefly. The main features of the architectural conversion of the building consisted, as usual, in the opening of a door in the west end and the construction of an apse at the east, the latter involving the difficult feat of replacing the two columns of the pronaos with an arch, without destroying the frieze immediately above. The opening for the apse was narrowed to a width of 4.62 m. by thick piers leading off from the antae. The piers, with their crowning capitals, reached a height of *ca.* 2.10 m. and supported an arch consisting of twenty-one voussoir blocks (fig. 16). It was established by Orlandos, Dinsmoor, and others that the first apse was destroyed at some undetermined time and replaced by the smaller one seen by Stuart and Revett,<sup>94</sup> Dupré,<sup>95</sup> and others<sup>96</sup> prior to 1834. Soon after this year the history of the building as the church of St. George came to an end; the apse was demolished and the bema arch was filled in with a rubble wall to make the building serviceable as a museum for stray bits of sculpture gathered from various parts of the city. In 1936 Orlandos, on behalf of the Greek Archaeological Service, removed the wall together with the arch, and restored the two columns of the pronaos. Until that time the pilaster capitals had been visible in the east and west faces of the wall; a discrepancy of 0.015 m. in the height of the blocks on the east and west made it plain that on neither side of the arch were the capitals composed of a single block.

<sup>90</sup> *The Erechtheion*, ed. by J. Paton (Cambridge, 1927), esp. 492–522.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511.

<sup>92</sup> A. Orlandos, *ABME*, II (1936), 207–216.

<sup>93</sup> Orlandos, *loc. cit.*; W. B. Dinsmoor, "Observations on the Hephaisteion," *Hesperia*, Suppl. V (1941), esp. 6–15; H. Koch, *Studien zum Theseustempel* (Berlin, 1955), 33–38. Full bibliography may be found in these three works.

<sup>94</sup> *The Antiquities of Athens*, III (1794), chap. I, pl. 11.

<sup>95</sup> *Voyage à Athènes* (1825), pl. 24.

<sup>96</sup> A. Blouet, etc. *Expédition scientifique de Morée* (1838), III, pl. 92 (expedition of 1829).

With the unblocking of the bema arch, its inner faces were exposed, revealing the actual composition of the pilaster capitals. Photographs taken at the time show up the piers as a shoddy bit of patchwork and leave no doubt that the capitals were not originally carved for this position (figs. 17-19).<sup>97</sup> The antae of the original building determined the depth of the arch and of its supports (*ca.* 1 m.). But this was not, as it were, a standard size in Early Christian architecture, and the masons working on the remodeling were neither willing to carve new, or able to find old, blocks of a suitable size. They used, accordingly, two ill-assorted pairs, one member from each pair to a side. Even this combination was not enough to cover the whole space and a gap of about 15 cm. was left between the two blocks. The gap was filled with a miserable patch of brick and mortar, of much the same character as the piers themselves, but quite inconsistent with the comparatively high quality of the carving. Presumably the gap was made less unsightly by a stucco filling, but that could not conceal the disparity between the two elements. Chipped surfaces, heavily weathered, leave no doubt that all four blocks were originally carved for use elsewhere in one, or more probably two, buildings, and that after the destruction of these buildings they lay around exposed to the elements for an appreciable time before being reused in their final position.

Alternating acanthus and water leaves, the most common decorative motif in Early Christian Athenian architecture, form the basis of the ornamental scheme of all the blocks, with the addition, on the western pair, of a central cross. Making due allowance for disparity in the competence of the stone carvers, it is probable that a difference of date should likewise be recognized. On the eastern pair (fig. 20) the acanthus, well co-ordinated with the lobes clearly related to the central stem, is much closer to its classical prototypes. On the companion pieces (figs. 21, 22) the upper lobes appear to be inserted into available spaces with little connection to the main body of the leaf, and the lack of naturalism is further accentuated by the harsh, vertical grooves down the center. This pair resembles most closely, in theme and execution, the design on a large piece of an epistyle in the Asklepieion which Xyngopoulos attributed to a later repair to the church on that site.<sup>98</sup> If we accept the sixth-century date now proposed for the church,<sup>99</sup> the epistyle would be at least as late as the sixth century. The earlier pair, on the basis of the meager chronological evidence available, should probably be placed about the middle or second half of the fifth century.<sup>100</sup>

On the basis of the evidence of the piers, the dating of the conversion of the Hephaisteion in the fourth, fifth, or even sixth century must be seriously questioned.<sup>101</sup> It is naturally impossible to determine with certainty the lapse of time that must be allowed for construction of the building in which the

<sup>97</sup> The photographs of the blocks *in situ* I owe to the generosity of Professor Orlandos.

<sup>98</sup> A. Xyngopoulos, *AE* (1915), 60 and fig. 12.

<sup>99</sup> See *supra*.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. unpublished pieces from Lechaion and Brauron.

<sup>101</sup> Koch (*op. cit.*, pp. 37-38) observed the discrepancy between the pairs of blocks, but still attributed the construction of the apse (though not of the vault) to the fifth or sixth century.

carved members were originally used, its destruction, and a period of desolation accountable for weathering before removal of the blocks to a protected spot. Theoretically, all of these phases could be compressed into a very short space of time. But the period of the fifth and most of the sixth century was not one of great destruction in Athens. The most likely occasion for extensive demolition was the Slavic invasion of the 580's. Although the possibility of a local disaster to a single building is not excluded, it is made less likely by the apparent difference in date between the two pairs of blocks, presupposing the destruction of two original buildings. The desolate condition of Athens for the twenty years following the invasion would account for the weathering. Of all the churches built in Athens before the invasion, only the basilica by the Ilissos is known to have survived.<sup>102</sup> By the time recovery began, in the reign of Heraclius, the city would have been in need of places of worship, the ruins of the churches would have provided convenient quarrying grounds for architectural members and the final demise of paganism would have removed the last obstacle to appropriation of the temples for Christian use.

How early in the seventh century the transformation of the Hephaisteion took place is impossible to say. With the establishment of a completely Christian city, the Parthenon would have had a prior claim and it might, by exception, have been converted even before the Slavic invasion. Because of its close proximity, the Erechtheion must have followed soon after but not, to judge by the *templon* slab, before the beginning of the seventh century. The Hephaisteion, with its less commanding position, was probably the last of the three; the atrocious masonry of the piers argues for a date well into the seventh century, possibly as late as Constans' visit. After 663 there would have been no further occasion for its transformation; all activity seems to have ceased until the Athenian-born Empress Eirene found her native city a convenient place of exile for her brothers-in-law.<sup>103</sup>

The date of the construction of the vault is irrelevant to the problem of the date of the original conversion of the temple. But, although the question of the vault is still unresolved, it should perhaps be stated here. Both Sotiriou and Orlandos, who dated the first remodeling in the fourth or fifth century, separated the vault from this operation, Sotiriou placing it "after the ninth century"<sup>104</sup> and Orlandos "in the middle Byzantine period."<sup>105</sup> Koch suggested the time of Basil II.<sup>106</sup> Dinsmoor<sup>107</sup> found evidence corroborating Orlandos' view. The weight of opinion is therefore on the side of late construction, but

<sup>102</sup> It is presumed to be the one mentioned by Michael Choniates as being in a state of neglect (cf. Sotiriou, *EMME*, I, 53).

<sup>103</sup> Theophanes, 473 (A.M. 6290). It would be interesting to know for what reason E. Bréton (*Athènes* [1862], 193) assigned the year 667; possibly he was following Pittakis who gave the same, unsubstantiated, answer (*L'ancienne Athènes* [Athens, 1835], 81). But Pittakis later revised this dating on the basis of two Christian graffiti on the columns which he read as 499 and 492 (*AE* [1853], 939, nos. 1599, 1600). Mommsen (*Athenae Christianae* [Leipzig, 1868], 99, no. 116) refuted Pittakis' reading and put the inscriptions "after the reign of Justinian."

<sup>104</sup> *AE* (1929), 172.

<sup>105</sup> *ABME*, II, 214.

<sup>106</sup> *Op. cit.*, 38.

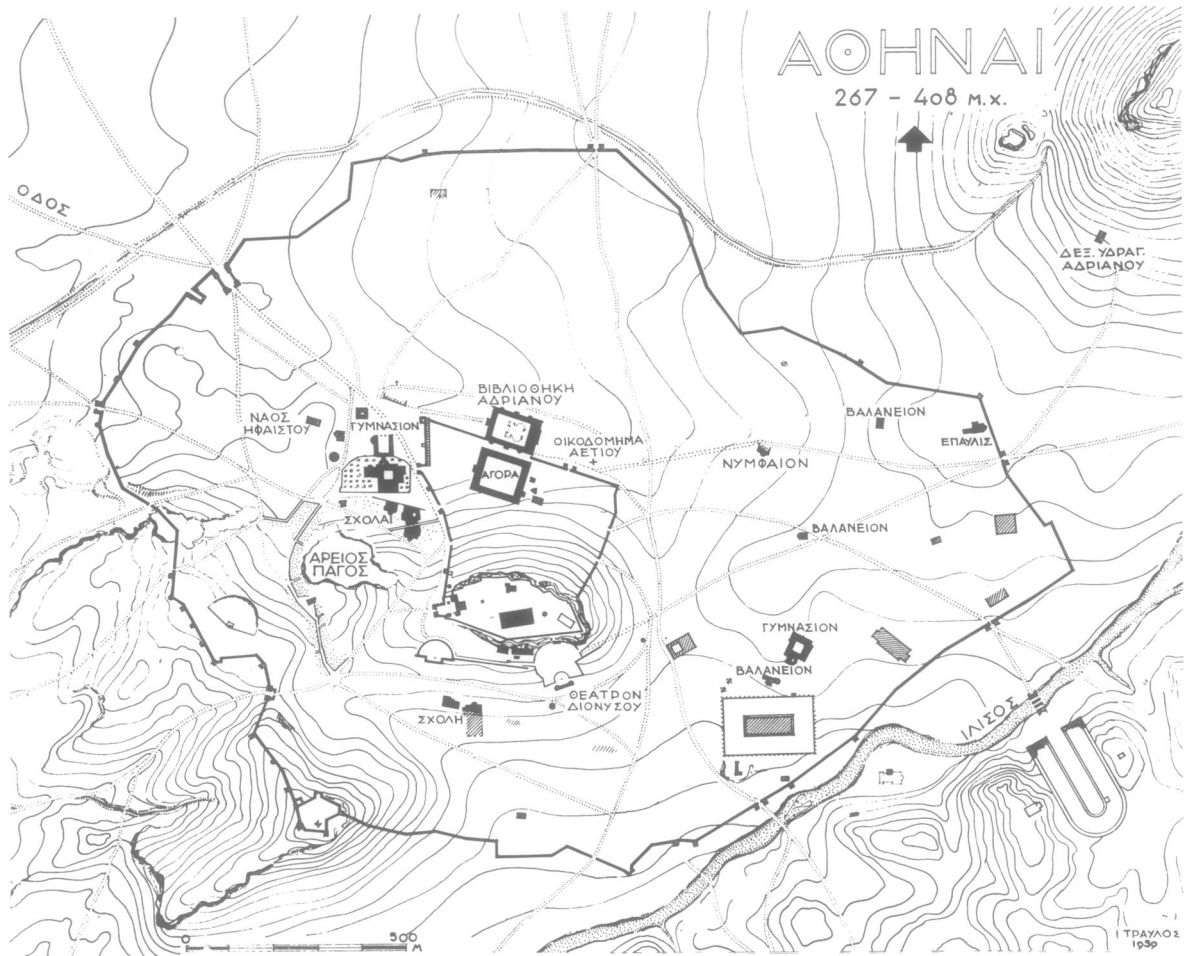
<sup>107</sup> *Op. cit.*, 11.

with no definite date. A. W. Lawrence, who examined the building in 1963, found parallels in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Crusader vaults in Syria, with the same use of rubble masonry and square lighting holes. It seems most likely that the replacement of the original large apse with the small one seen by the early travelers was connected with the construction of the vault; that both apse and roof met with some disaster and were replaced at the same time. But beyond the fact that no traces of fire have ever been found in the entire building, it is impossible to say what was the nature of the disaster. We must probably exclude the destruction caused by the forces of Leon Sgouros in 1204 because elsewhere in the Agora indications of his activities are always accompanied by evidence of burning.

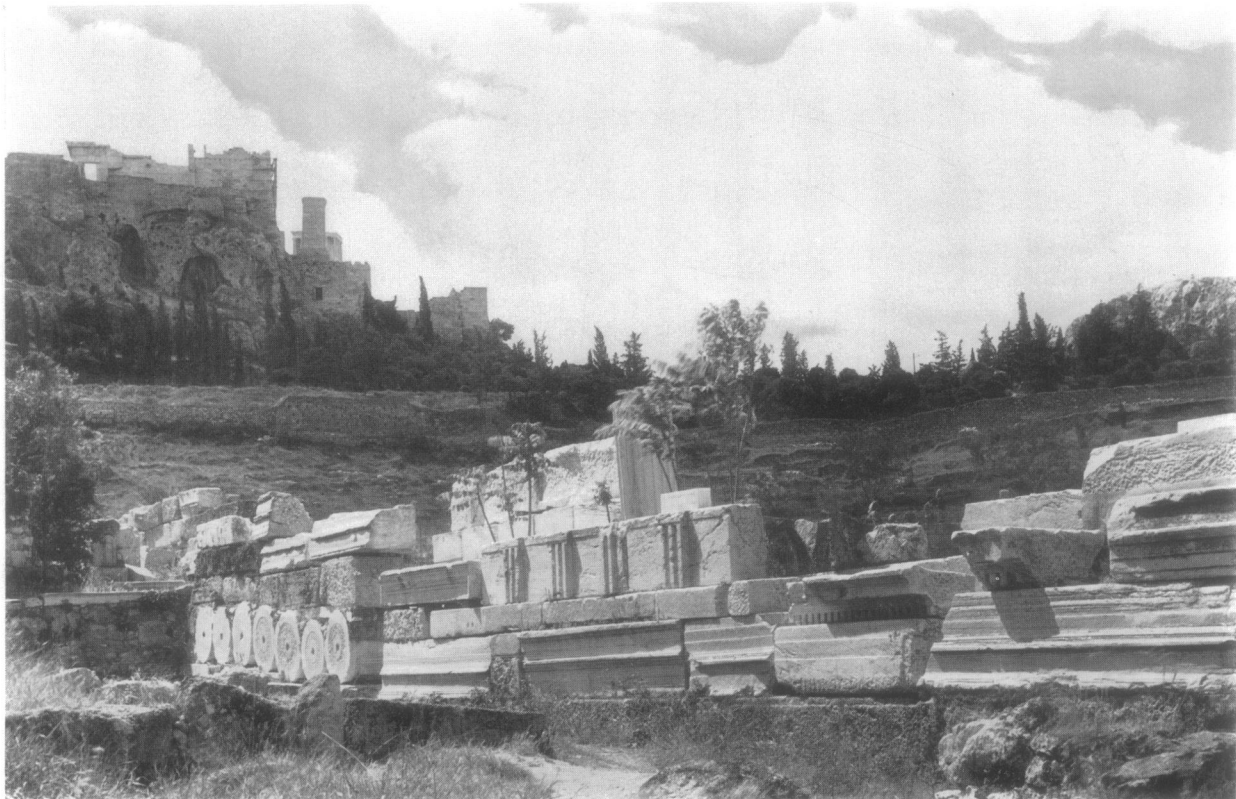
It has been maintained that the many Christian gravestones, small objects with Christian symbols, as well as unmistakable signs of building activity among the Christian population of Athens, argue against a late date for the conversion of the temples. But we have only to consider a parallel situation in Rome, a city far less uncompromising than Athens in upholding the pagan tradition. There the power and influence of the Christians is clearly attested by innumerable churches, cemeteries, etc. and yet the first known instance of the conversion of a genuine Roman temple is the Pantheon, which became the church of S. Maria ad Martyres in 609, under Boniface IV.<sup>108</sup> It may be noted that the entry in the *Liber Pontificalis* recording this event follows immediately after a report of famine, pestilence, and flood.

The parallel with Athens is close. The basilicas which had risen on the outskirts of the city in the great building period of the fifth century had no protection against the Slavic invaders of the late sixth. They were more exposed and less solidly constructed than the buildings within the city and undoubtedly, with their rich ornament and sacramental furniture, more attractive to looters than the earlier structures from which "those things which ought not to be moved" had already vanished. That the basilicas were not reconstructed or repaired is not surprising. Greece was beleaguered both by land and by sea and the future held no security. The temples, although probably in disrepair, provided substantial shelter in a less vulnerable position, and the pagan spirits, now finally laid to rest, offered no further terrors. So it was by virtue of necessity rather than in token of a victorious faith that the temples of the old dispensation became the province of the new.

<sup>108</sup> *LP*, I, 317. The so-called *Templum Urbis Romae*, transformed into the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian under Felix IV (526-530), was not a temple in the proper sense but rather an adjunct to the library in the Forum Pacis of Vespasian. It received its popular name only in the seventeenth century. In a city where events such as this were so well documented in the *Liber Pontificalis*, the *argumentum ex silentio* carries considerable weight and we may well believe that the Pantheon was indeed the first temple to be converted.



1. Athens, A.D. 267-408.



2. Late Roman Fortification in the Agora



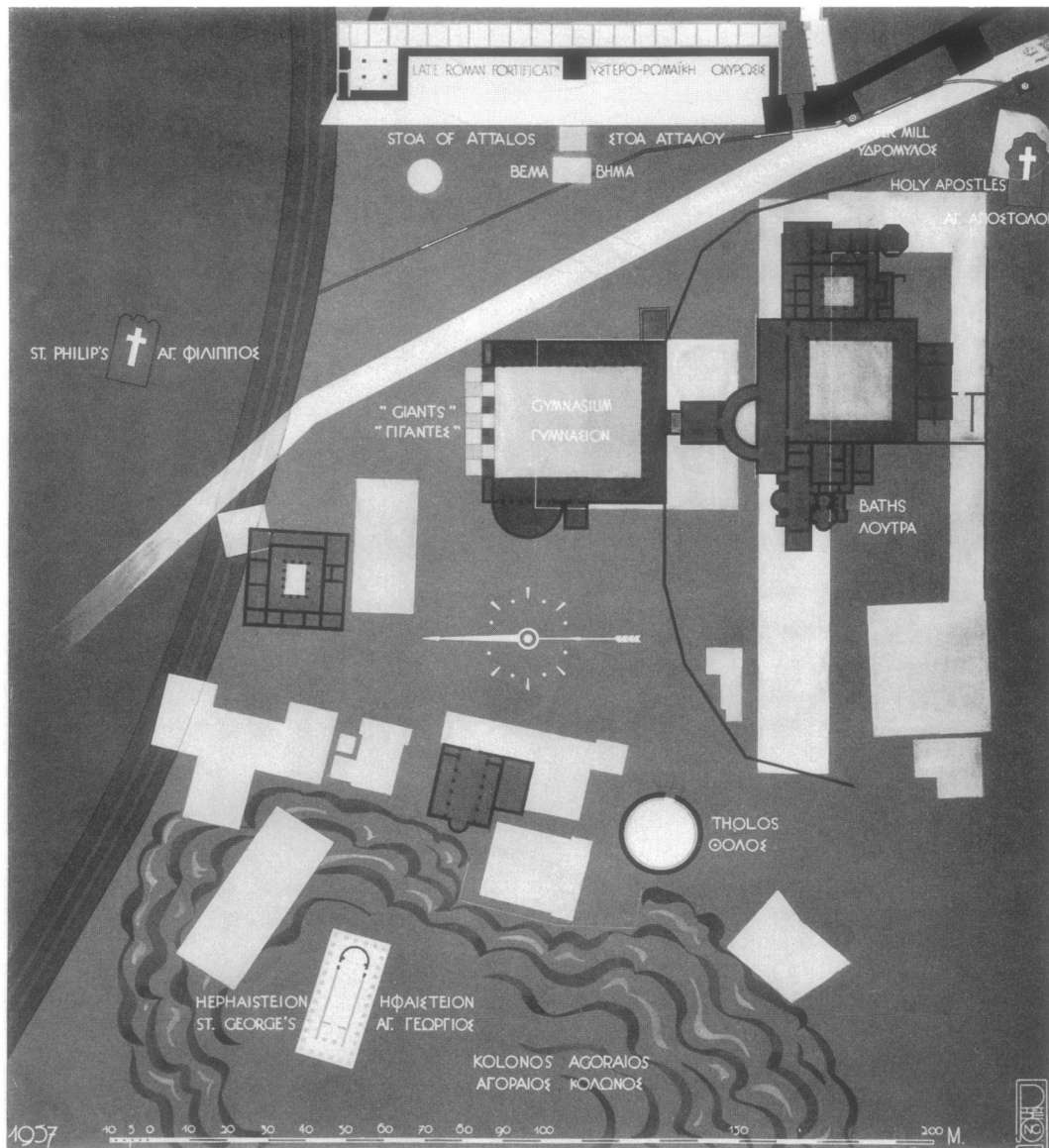
3. Early Christian Lamp from the Agora



4. Early Christian Lamp from the Agora



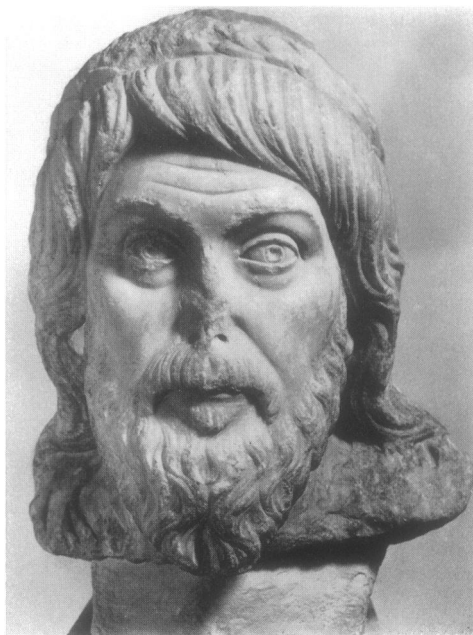
5. Christian Tombstone from the Agora



6. The Agora in the Fifth Century A.D.



7. Pilaster Capital from the Gymnasium in the Agora



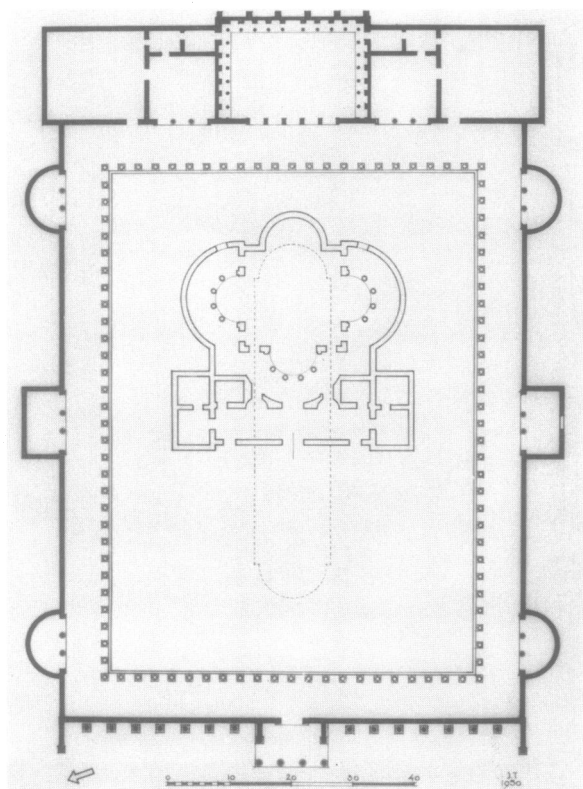
10. Acropolis Museum.  
Portrait of a Philosopher



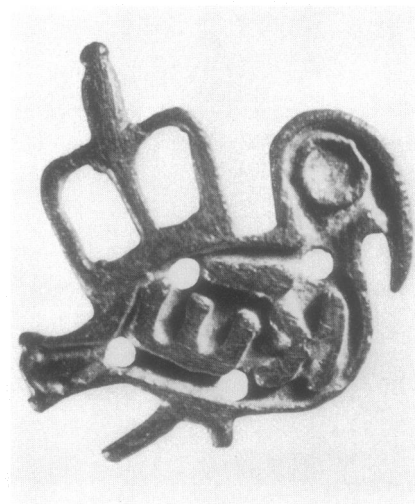
8. Silenus, from the Stage of Phaedrus in the  
Theater of Dionysos



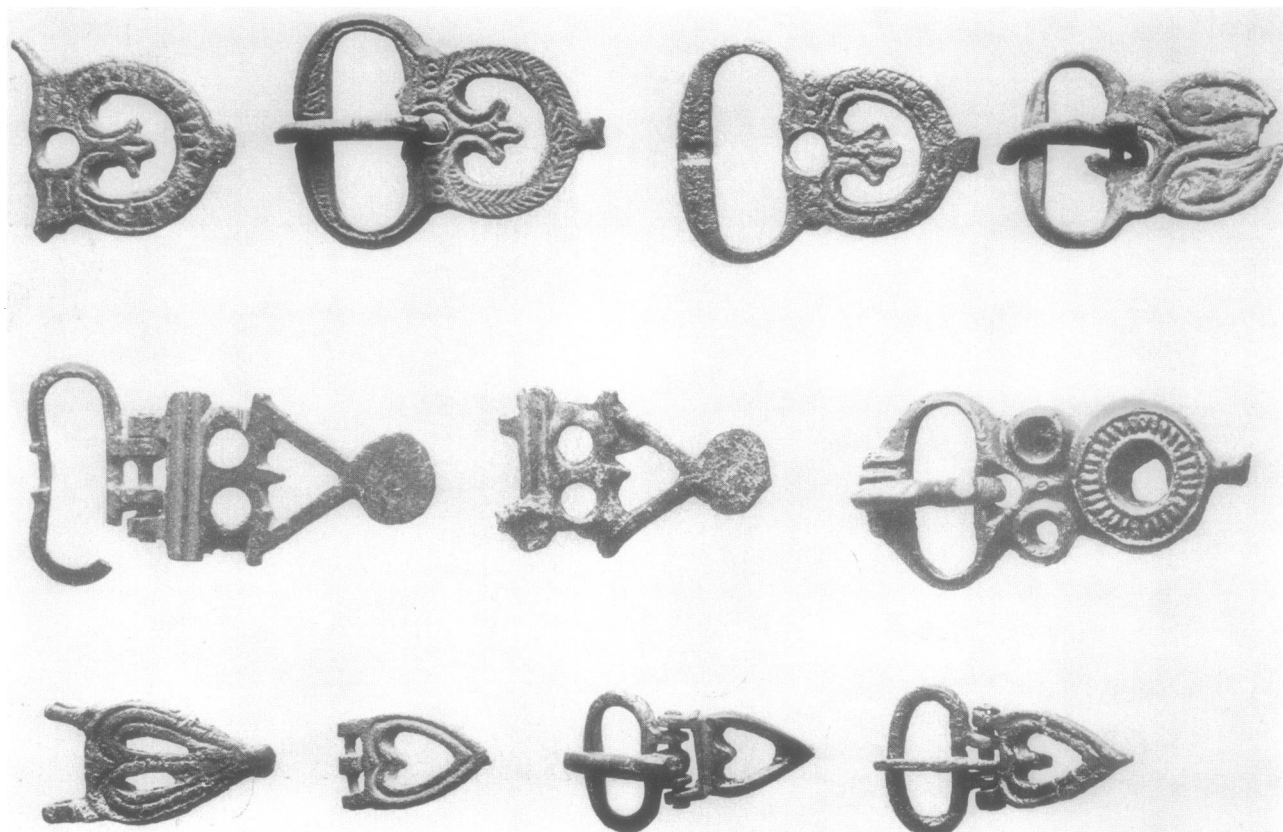
9. Statue of a Magistrate from the Agora



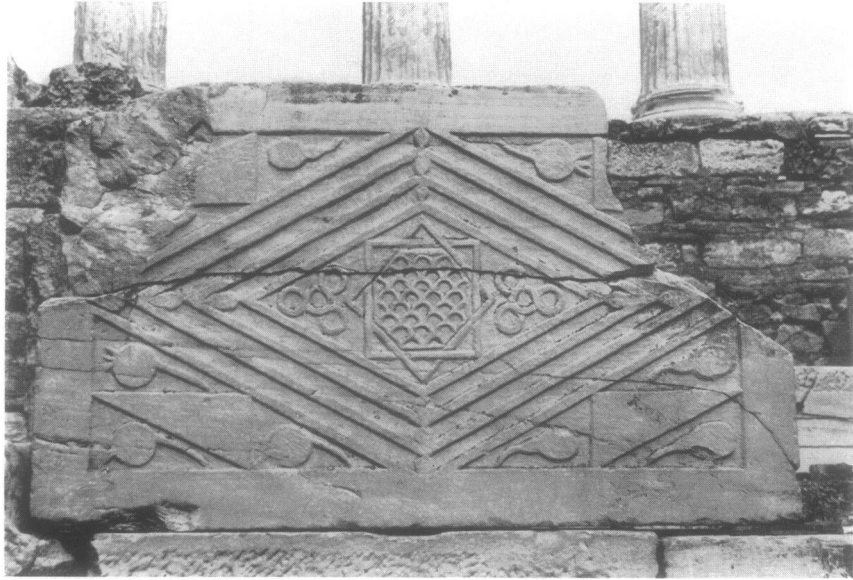
11. Quatrefoil Building in the Library of Hadrian



13. Harness Ornament from the Agora



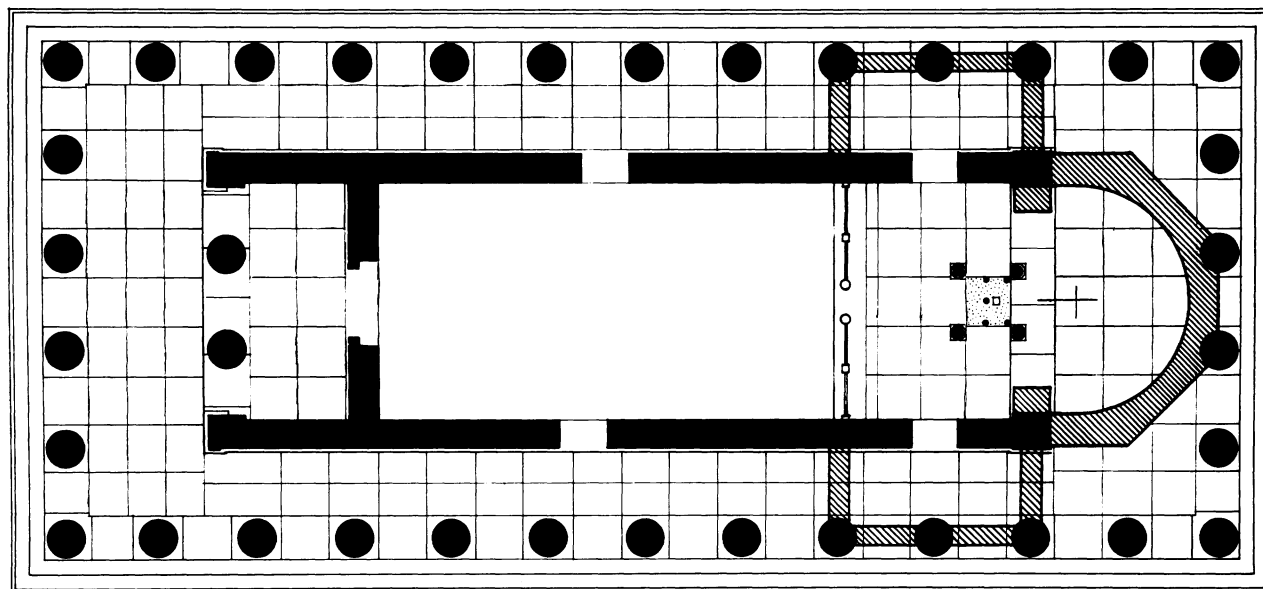
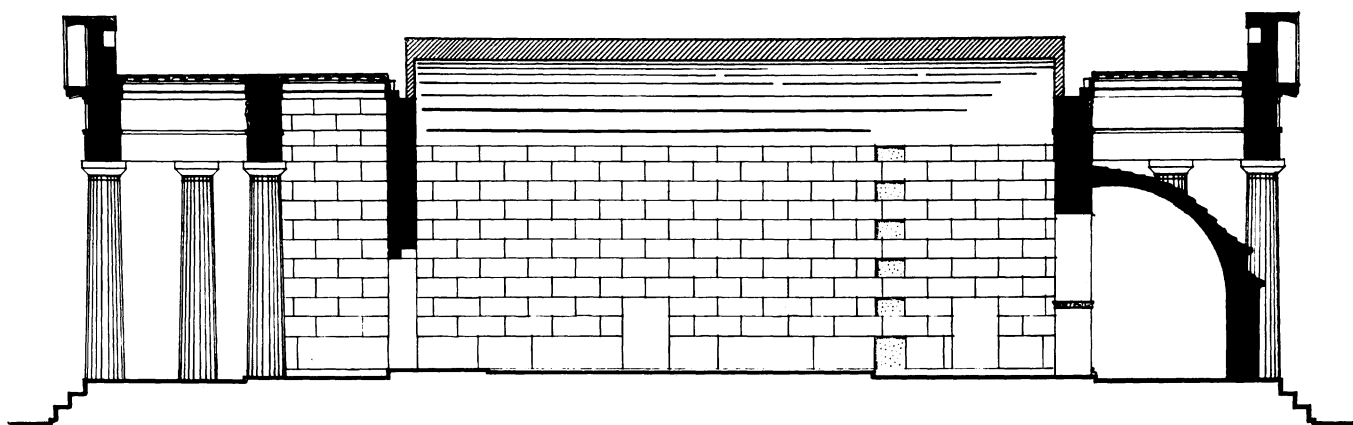
12. Seventh-century Buckles from the Agora (Selection)



14. *Templon* Slab in the Erechtheion

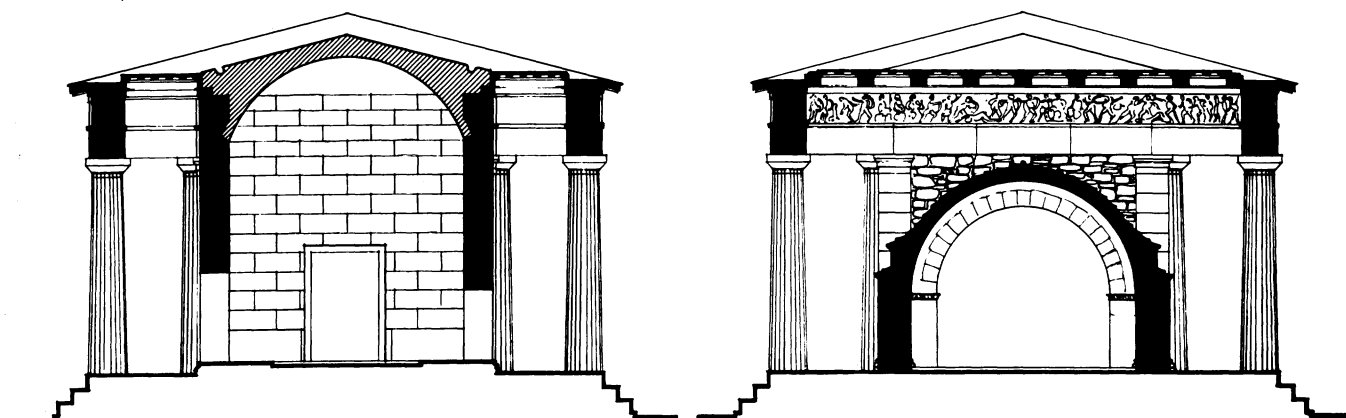


15. The Temple of Hephaistos



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16. The Hephaisteion as a Christian Church. (Plan and Sections)



17. East Face, South Side



18. Inner Face, South



19. Inner Face, North

The Hephaisteion as a Christian Church. Mouldings in the Bema Arch



20.



21.



22.

Early Christian Mouldings from the Hephaisteion